

Weaning

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shortly. Kum kept on shouting until finally his mother ⁸⁶⁶ stopped answering him. Then he began to wail. His older *brothers*, who were playing ball a short distance away, told him to be quiet. His stepmother, who was working in the house, after several times telling him to hush, finally gave him a scolding.

During the weaning period a child continues to receive help from his mother if he is in grave danger or sick. If he contracts malaria or some other serious disease, she will take him back into her lap and minister to him. If he has a head-ache or stomach-ache, she attempts to cure him by phlebotomy. When Kum once got lost in the forest, his mother and both his *brothers*, guided by his cries, searched until they found him and brought him home. Thus a child must learn to discriminate between serious dangers and minor pains. Demanding is still successful as a response to the former situation, but it is necessary to discover a new mode of coping with the latter. [757]

Parents and older siblings teach a child to anticipate pain. They point out dangers so that he may avoid them before he is hurt. They warn him about snakes, scorpions, nettles, and other objects in the natural environment that may injure him. He soon discovers that if he does not heed their warnings, the predicted pain does follow, and so he learns to heed them.

Parents and older siblings extend their warnings to include supernatural dangers. They tell the child that huge, ⁸⁶⁹ ⁸⁶⁶ snakelike monsters which cause storms dwell in the swamp, and that it is dangerous to go near their dwelling places. This danger is brought within the sphere of experience of [862] the child when his mother tells him that a *marulaj* occupies her breast and vivifies the story by putting a leech on it. A child is also warned during the weaning period not to venture out at night, for this is the time when ghosts are abroad; and not to go too far from the house unless accompanied by an older person, for if he does a sorcerer may kill him.

A child at this age also learns that people as well as the ⁸⁶¹

861 natural environment may inflict pain upon him. His parents push him around, scold him, and sometimes even spank him.¹ They strike hard enough to give meaning to their commands and scolding, but not hard enough to injure him. His older siblings also scold and punish him. He learns to respond to punishments with two special forms of behavior: obeying and escaping. He learns that if he does as he is told he will not be punished. He also learns that if he runs away when someone threatens him he is less likely to be hit. Kum was playing with a broom one afternoon and started to take it out from under the porch. His older *sister* noticed this and told him to bring it back, starting toward him threateningly. Kum dropped the broom and ran. The *sister* did not pursue him.

866 Thus during the weaning period, except when he is in seri-
862 ous danger, a child is forced to give up demanding as the preferred response and must learn new and independent habits. He is aided in this learning by warnings from his parents and older siblings. These warnings are extended to include beliefs about supernatural dangers. Finally, it is during this period that a child begins to experience pain from other persons and learns to obey commands and to escape from threats.

866 Weaning greatly increases a child's experience of anxiety.
862 His desire to sit in his mother's lap and his fear of being
152 pushed away and scolded for it, the desire to suckle and the belief that there is a *masalai* in his mother's breast, the wish for his demands to be heeded and the punishments he receives for crying, all are anxiety-producing sources of conflict. As has already been shown, obeying, escaping, and learning new habits are the means by which he reduces these anxieties. Sickness, however, remains an unresolved source of anxiety.

865 Aggression still plays a minor rôle in the life of a Kwoma during the weaning period. In some ways aggressive behavior is less successful at this time than it was during infancy. Although the child becomes more adept at killing mosquitoes

¹ Kwoma parents customarily spank their children by striking them between the shoulder blades with their open hands. They do not hold the child, but chase him if he attempts to escape. The child is usually able to elude the parent after one or two blows have fallen.

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of Kwoma children is very effective in this respect. Errors 861
and warnings sharply differentiate the things in the environ- 824
ment which may, and those which may not, be eaten, with the 825
result that Kwoma children show a remarkable knowledge of 262
the local flora and fauna.

Parents provide their children with a general formula to keep them from eating harmful food. The formula is: if you do not know a thing is good to eat, do not try it. I have no data on how this fear of strangeness is transmitted to the child, but I did observe the fact that children generally reacted with fear to strange objects and persons.

A Kwoma child learns that, in addition to things naturally 869
inedible, there are also foods which are made poisonous by 754
sorcerers. Boys and girls are told never to eat food given 609
them by a stranger or a non-relative, for it may be poisoned 264
by the insertion of a magical white powder. As an example of parental training on this point, Wof refused to allow Mey and Fit to eat at my house because I bought bananas, paw-paws, yams, and other vegetables from people of other hamlets. He also warned us not to eat this food, for we might have enemies in the tribe who would try to poison us. Another illustration of the manner in which this eating restriction is inculcated occurred when Marok's dog died. It was his best hunting dog, and both he and his wife and sister were very fond of the animal. When it died, they wailed as they would have done for a member of the family. It died early one morning, and the women mourned throughout the day. By afternoon flies had gathered about the dead animal and laid their eggs upon it. Mey, Fit, and Buka were with me when Marok pointed to these flyblows and told me that this was the poisonous white powder which sorcerers use. This was definite proof, he said, that someone had tried to poison him or one of his family, but that the unfortunate dog had eaten the food instead and died as a result. All the children of the hamlet soon knew the imputed cause of the dog's death, and it is probable that this knowledge served to strengthen their fear of food not prepared by relatives.

A child is warned about another type of sorcery which also

869 pertains to food but is concerned with how and where a per-
 754 son can safely eat rather than with what he can eat. A child
 609 is taught to be very careful with his crumbs and other food
 264 leavings. He is warned that, if someone steals such material
 and performs a certain magical rite upon it, he will sicken
 and die, and that, therefore, he should be particularly care-
 ful if he eats anywhere but in his own house. It is difficult for
 a thief of sorcery material to steal leavings from the floor or
 rubbish heap of your own dwelling because he would be killed
 on the spot if he were caught at it, but a sorcerer can pick up
 food leavings left in the forest with little danger of discov-
 [602] ery. Since relatives may not sorcerize one another, one may
 [571] eat in their houses if one is careful, but parents warn chil-
 dren never to eat in the house of a non-relative, for a crumb
 may fall, no matter how careful they may be, and non-rela-
 tives are not to be trusted. A child is warned that his blood is
 [826] another material which must be kept from the hands of sor-
 cerers: therefore, if he cut himself, he should take care to
 catch or wipe up the blood in a leaf which he should burn or
 [825] hide in a safe place. He is also warned that his blood "goes
 into" any animal that he kills, so that he must be careful not
 to spill the blood of such an animal.

869 A child does not have to be warned frequently about the
 754 dangers of sorcery because his parents show such fear of it.²
 152 Whenever anyone is sick in the hamlet, practically the only
 [521] subject of conversation is sorcery. Adults speculate about
 the identity of the sorcerer and curse those whom they sus-
 pect. Everyone is worried and emotional. The almost hysteri-
 cal reaction of his parents to sorcery impresses the serious-
 ness of the danger upon the child so vividly that it is not dif-
 ficult to teach him to be careful.

867 In addition to learning that he may not eat things natu-
 264 rally poisonous nor food contaminated by sorcery, the child
 is conditioned against eating food which belongs to someone
 else. In other words, he comes face to face with the property

[13] ² Emotional attitudes as well as overt habits are subject to imitation.
 See N. E. Miller and John Dollard, *Social Learning and Imitation* (New
 Haven, 1941), chap. xlv.

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may learn to avoid or kill a scorpion even though he has ⁸⁶⁶ never been bitten by one. So it is with other dangers, especially the more serious ones; if children were permitted to learn to avoid wild boars or crocodiles by actually experiencing pain from them, the society would soon disappear. Parental warnings come true frequently enough so that children usually heed them.

A child is not permitted to show excessive fear of his environment. If he is too afraid of a small snake or lizard to kill ^[261] it, or if he is afraid to walk in the swamp lest he be pricked by a thorn, his older ~~brothers~~ will tease him and his parents will scold him. An overanxious child is usually called a "baby" in a derogatory manner.

The warnings of parents and older siblings include ⁸⁶⁹ supernatural dangers. ⁷⁷⁶ A child is taught that certain glens, springs, rocks, and trees are dwelling places of *marsalai*, and he learns the names of the supernatural beings who inhabit them. He is warned that, if he goes too near one of these places, the monster will cause a violent storm and high wind that may blow down the dwelling of his parents, or it will "shoot" a sago needle into his foot for disturbing it. Such a needle, although invisible, is very painful and can be removed only by adult operators who have mastered the special magical technique. Actual storms and unseen needles are used to impress the validity of these beliefs upon the child. Whenever there is a severe storm, the adults in the hamlet speculate as to who has disturbed the *marsalai*. Was it Yat who was clearing a garden too near to the rock in which Kumbundum dwelt, or was it Wof who went hunting near the bog inhabited by Kurumbukwas? Similarly when a child reported that he had a pain in his foot which felt like a thorn but which he could not see, his parents would say: "There, you see. You have been 'shot' by a *marsalai*. We told you to be aware of disturbing them."

A child is warned that he should not go near the house ⁸⁶⁹ tambran while the yam-cult ceremonies are being held. He is told that at this time the adult men of the tribe consort with *marsalai*. He is warned that although men can do so

- 869 with impunity, it would be extremely dangerous for children and women to be near the scene. In fact, a child is told that he would die if he entered the house tambran at the time of a ceremony. Cases are cited to the children of women and children who had joined the men at this time either willfully [534] or by mistake and who had died as a result. The initiated tell the children that the gongs, trumpets, flutes, water drums, and bull roarers that they hear at the time of a ceremony are the voices of the *masalai* who are present. Hints that these are man-made sounds come seeping down from adolescents and the careless remarks of adults, so that the child has a fairly accurate knowledge of the ceremonies before he ever participates in one. Despite his scepticism about the origin of the sounds, he nevertheless is awed whenever a ceremony takes place, and takes care not to venture near the scene. Furthermore, he takes care not to reveal to the adults that he has any suspicion of what really goes on.

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796 Despite a child's awe of these meetings of the yam cult, he senses the excitement which prevails in the whole subtribe before a ceremony takes place and eagerly looks forward to the time when he will be old enough to attend them. He hears his father, *uncles*, and *older brothers* talk excitedly about the coming event, he sees them carefully paint their faces, comb their hair, don their best ornaments, and depart for the house tambran. Then he hears the rhythmic harmonies of the gong orchestra, the high-pitched shouting of the singers, and the weird and plaintive flute melodies. These thrilling sounds burst out sporadically during the whole day, increase in tempo and intensity as night falls, and continue unabated as long as he stays awake. Stimulated by these events, [857] Kwoma boys make toy gongs from bamboo nodes and try to imitate the gong rhythms; they hum mimics of the ceremonial songs; and they form miniature groups to practice the shuffling dance steps. Since they are not supposed to know these things, they do them in their forest playhouse or at times when there are no adults present.

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789 Parents and older siblings also warn a child not to trespass in another person's garden lest he break out with boils. They

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tell him that the owner of a garden usually casts a spell on it so that anyone who enters it will be afflicted in this way. 869 789

Ghost lore is taught during childhood. The child is told that the spirits of the dead live on a mountain at the edge of the tribal territory, where they lead a topsy-turvy existence. They go by canoe on land and walk upon the water; they sleep by day and venture out at night. Often they assume the shape of a bird or beast. After dark they are attracted by whistling. They frequent a corpse, especially just after death. A child is warned that a ghost is dangerous, and is taught that it is the wish of ghosts to take his soul to the land of the dead. Close contact with them is therefore also dangerous," and a child is told not to go near a burial platform. Sometimes ghosts appear in nightmares and struggle to take the soul of the dreamer. Sometimes they possess people and make them irresponsible for their actions. In these cases a child is taught to be aggressive toward the ghost. When a person is possessed or has a nightmare, those who are present at the time, children included, beat the air with sticks and shout curses and commands at the ghost in order to frighten him away. 869 775

A child is punished if he does not heed the warnings of his parents and older siblings. This holds in both the natural and the supernatural spheres. Since I did not know the culture, I was, in a sense, in the status of a child. One day when I was walking in the swamp with Kar and Gwiyp, they pointed out a water hole that was supposed to be the dwelling place of a *marsalai*. I poked my walking stick into it. Kar shouted at me to take it out, then told me very seriously of the danger of doing such a thing. Gwiyp joined in the scolding. 861 123

The following case illustrates strikingly the punishment of a child for not heeding a warning. When some of my shotgun shells spoiled, I cut off the shot and lit the powder, which went off with a puff and amused the natives. Kwos, one of the

¹¹ The belief that all death is due to sorcery is somewhat contradictory to this. The Kwoma are not very specific about the mechanism of death, but unless a person is sorcerized a ghost cannot succeed in taking the soul. Ghosts are nevertheless feared. [76]

[p.202]

CHAPTER VIII

THE INCULCATION OF SUPERNATURAL BELIEFS

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• 869 THE manner in which supernatural beliefs and practices are transmitted to the oncoming generation is one of the most puzzling problems which a student of socialization has to solve. When a teacher wishes to transmit customs which accord with natural and social laws, he has the support of the environment, which supplies both motivation and reward to validate his teaching efforts. When, however, the teacher's task is to transmit habits which do not accord with these laws, his task should be more difficult. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe and analyze the way in which supernatural beliefs are transmitted at Kwoma and to suggest some hypotheses concerning their transmission in other societies.

A number of factors are responsible for the inculcation of supernatural beliefs. Perhaps the most basic of these is the technique of warning described in the previous chapter. Generalization from real dangers, imitation, the operation of chance, and finally social punishments also play an important part in the process. These factors will be discussed and exemplified in the following pages.

An analysis of the cases in which supernatural beliefs and practices are transmitted at Kwoma indicates that teachers rely in large part upon the technique of warning to inculcate this aspect of the culture. This technique was defined, analyzed, and exemplified in the last chapter. It was shown that a warning consists of a specification of the danger and its source, and of instructions for escape from, or avoidance of, the danger. It was shown that Kwoma pupils learn to heed warnings because when they ignore them they experience pain both from the source specified in the warning and from the teacher who punishes them.

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The warnings which Kwoma teachers issue may be divided into two categories: realistic and unrealistic. A realistic warning is one which, if not heeded, will result in pain from the source specified, whereas an unrealistic warning is one which, if not heeded, will not result in pain from the source specified. 121 869 861

Realistic warnings are continually employed by Kwoma teachers concerning all the dangers which appear in the natural and social environments. To list all the warnings a person might receive in the course of his life would be to list much of the culture. It is expedient, however, to mention a few of these warnings in order to indicate how strongly the habit of heeding is built up in the Kwoma pupil. During the weaning period a child is warned not to go too far from home lest he get lost, not to eat certain poisonous foods lest he become sick or die, and not to take or destroy the property of others lest he be punished by the owners. During childhood he is warned not to be impolite to relatives lest they scold him, not to walk about in the houses of other people lest they punish him, not to go alone in the swamp lest he be killed by a wild pig or crocodile, and not to hurt a sibling seriously lest he thereby hurt himself. A boy is warned not to stare at the genitals of females lest they punish him, and not to have an erection in front of his *sister* lest she beat his penis with a stick. Girls are warned not to behave immodestly lest they be criticized. An adolescent boy is warned not to be lazy lest no woman choose him for a husband, not to be caught philandering lest he be attacked by the girl's relatives, not to rape a girl lest he be killed by her relatives, not to hunt pigs lest he be killed or injured, and not to trespass on the property of others lest he be forced to pay damages. An adolescent girl is warned not to be lazy lest no one marry her, and not to be unchaste lest her *brothers* refuse to help and protect her. Adults are also frequently warned by friends and relatives throughout their lives. 121 861 [862] [858] [882] [885]

Whenever a Kwoma child does not heed one of the above-listed warnings, it is highly probable that he will experience the pain specified in the warning and that he will be scolded

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861 or beaten by his teachers. Thus a strong habit of heeding whatever warning a teacher may issue is built up in every Kwoma individual. As a result, Kwoma teachers may warn their pupils concerning dangers which do not exist and expect that their pupils will heed. This is in fact the case in the inculcation of supernatural beliefs. By means of warnings Kwoma teachers instill in their pupils an unrealistic fear of *marsalai*, ghosts, sorcery, and blood.¹

[116] *Marsalai* are supposed to be huge monsters in the form of snakes or crocodiles which cause rain and wind storms, earthquakes, and other cosmic phenomena. They are supposed to be present at the yam-cult ceremonies and to be responsible for a plentiful yield of this crop. A child is first warned about these monsters early in life. When a Kwoma mother weans her child she warns him not to suckle, lest he be injured by the *marsalai* which has now taken possession of her breast. She sometimes emphasizes this story by putting a bloodsucker on her breast. During childhood a person is warned not to go near or touch certain rocks and waterholes, lest the *marsalai* who dwell therein cause a storm or shoot a sago needle into his foot in anger at being disturbed. He is also warned at this period not to go near the house tamberan during a cult ceremony lest the *marsalai* who are present kill him. He is told that the sounds² which he hears are the voices of these monsters. When he is initiated at the beginning of adolescence, he is warned not to look up too suddenly at the cult figures which represent the *marsalai* lest the shock kill him.

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775 Ghosts are believed to be the spirits of dead Kwoma who live on the outskirts of the tribal territory. Either as invisible shadows or in the form of a bird or an animal, they sometimes visit the hamlet of the living, particularly at night or when a death has occurred. It is believed that they sometimes attack a person, that they can cause accidents by frightening him, that they are eager to take souls to the land of the dead, and that they cause nightmares and fits of possession. Most warn-

¹ Kwoma have other supernatural beliefs, but these four provide the most important sources of unrealistic fear.

² Gongs, flutes, and bull-roarers.

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ings about ghosts are issued during childhood. Boys and girls are warned not to go abroad at night lest they be attacked by ghosts, not to approach the places specified as the land of the dead lest an accident befall them, not to go near the platform on which the dead are exposed lest the ghosts which hover around harm them, and not to whistle at night lest they attract these dangerous supernatural beings. Adolescents are warned not to disobey the commands of a ghost as they are issued through the medium of a possessed person lest they come to harm. 869
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The Kwoma believe that certain people have the power to injure or kill by means of sorcery. They do so either by inserting a magical "poison" into food to be eaten by the victim or by burning in a special clay pot certain materials, particularly food leavings, blood, and semen, which have been associated with the victim. A child is first warned about sorcery during the weaning period, when he is told not to eat food given him by anyone except a close relative, lest there be "poison" in it, and not to eat away from home lest he carelessly spill crumbs with which he can be sorcerized. These warnings are repeated during childhood, and others are added. A boy is warned not to spill the blood of the snakes and marsupials which he kills, lest it be found by a sorcerer and used against him. He is also warned to be careful not to spill his own blood when he cuts himself. Adolescent boys are warned not to have sexual intercourse with a girl who is likely to give his sperm to a sorcerer. Adolescent girls are warned to dispose of their menstrual blood carefully, so that it cannot be used as sorcery material. [787]
[882]

The Kwoma believe that food is converted into blood, which remains in the system for a time and then deteriorates. Good (fresh) blood is responsible for the health of an adult and the normal growth of a child. Bad (deteriorated) blood causes sickness and pain and prevents normal growth. It follows from this theory that bad blood must be removed from the system in order to insure good health and normal growth, and that care must be taken not to eat food contaminated with bad blood and thus get it back into the system. 869
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826 Kwoma children are warned that if they do not allow someone to bleed them when they have a headache, stomach-ache, [57] or sprain, the pain will become worse and they may even become seriously ill. A boy is also warned that if he does not [856] bleed his penis he will not grow up.^{*} When the age-grade initiation approaches, a boy is warned that if he does not attend it and have his blood ceremonially let, he will not grow up. [262] Since this operation is performed in a stream, he is warned that if he eats fish he will become sick, for the fish may have been contaminated by his blood. He is warned that if he eats an animal which he has killed with a spear or arrow he will sicken and perhaps die, since his blood enters the animal through his weapon and contaminates its flesh. This warning is reiterated to adults when they begin pig hunting. An adult who plants yams is warned not to eat them lest he become sick, for the seed and produce have become contaminated with his blood.

869 One other unrealistic warning should be mentioned here, 262 because a case involving it will be discussed later. Adoles- 562 cents are warned that if they eat sago flour washed by a 252 woman it will make them sick. The normal procedure in processing sago flour is for the woman, either sister or wife, to crush the pith and for the man to rinse the flour from it.

121 The following case will serve to illustrate the psychologi- 869 cal effect that the above unrealistic warnings usually have 823 upon a Kwoma pupil. Kar, Mar, Gwiyp, and I were walk- 123 ing through the swamp one day, and the path passed by a waterhole. Kar warned the rest of us not to pass too near it for it was the dwelling place of a *marsalai*. Mar and Gwiyp heeded and passed by the waterhole at a distance. I, however, did not heed, approached the hole, and poked my walking stick into it. The three Kwoma shouted at me for doing this, warning me to stop and scolding me for my temerity. The fact that Mar and Gwiyp passed by the waterhole at a distance can be analyzed thus: the drive was fear evoked by Kar's warning due to the pain which both Mar and Gwiyp

^{*} This warning is not made directly but by implication, and the practice is performed in secret. See chap. IV, p. 64.

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had previously experienced, for not heeding realistic warnings; the response was avoiding the waterhole; the cues were the sight of the waterhole and Kar's instructions; and the reward was the reduction of fear. Since I had not been brought up in Kwoma society, Kar's warning did not evoke fear and I did not make the right response. 121 869 823 123

Although the technique of warning provides the basis for the inculcation of supernatural fears, several other factors play an important part in this process. One of these factors is the belief that supernatural dangers are similar to real dangers, a fact which strengthens the Kwoma child's fear of them by the principle of secondary generalization. 121 153 869

Since *marsalai* are described as great snakes or crocodiles which live in the swamp, realistic warnings about snakes, crocodiles, and other dangerous animals would tend to generalize to these supernatural monsters. In other words, each time a Kwoma is reinforced for heeding a warning about an animal, particularly a snake or crocodile, he is also somewhat reinforced for heeding warnings about *marsalai*,³ that is, unrealistic fears. A second source of generalization is that warnings about *marsalai* all concern disturbing their dwelling places. The common word for house is used to describe these supposed dwellings, so that all realistic warnings about trespassing in, and stealing from, the house of human beings also strengthen the warnings about *marsalai*. Finally, *marsalai* are described as being huge. Since large animals and 121 869 776 153

³ If two objects are described by the same term, a person tends to respond to them both in a similar manner. Hull has described this as secondary generalization. See C. L. Hull, "The Problem of Stimulus Equivalence in Behavior Theory," *Psychol. Rev.*, XLVI (1939), 9-30. It is also discussed by Miller. See N. E. Miller and John Dollard, *Social Learning and Imitation* (New Haven, 1941), chap. v. Experimental evidence in support of this principle has recently been adduced by Dr. Jane Birge. See J. S. Birge, "The Role of Verbal Responses in Transfer" (Doctoral Dissertation, Yale University, 1941). G. P. Murdock has found empirical support for this principle in a study of the generalization of incest taboos by means of common kinship terms. [113]

⁴ Kwoma vivify their warnings about *marsalai* by telling children that the sounds they hear at the time of a ceremony are the voices of these monsters. The sounds are in reality produced by gongs, bull-roarers, and flutes, but this theory offers another avenue of generalization from animals to *marsalai* on the basis of the sounds which they both make.

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- 121 big men are likely to be more dangerous than small ones,
 869 generalization on the basis of size also tends to support the
 776 warnings issued about these supernatural beings.

121 Ghosts are described not only as having human form but
 869 as actually being the spirits of deceased persons. Kwoma
 153 seldom speak of ghosts in general terms, but usually specify
 775 the ghost of some particular deceased relative. When a
 Kwoma dreams of someone who has died, he is told that the
 ghost of this person has actually visited him in the night.
 Moreover, living persons are sometimes called ghosts. Thus
 the similarity between men and ghosts is impressed upon a
 child. Hence, when he is rewarded for heeding warnings
 about living persons, this should by generalization strengthen
 the habit of heeding warnings about ghosts. Kwoma children
 are told that ghosts can assume the form of birds and ani-
 mals. Whenever a bird or animal is heard or seen at night,
 it is often suggested that it may be a ghost in disguise. Thus
 fear of ghosts may generalize from animals as well as from
 men.

121 Fear of food "poisoned" by sorcery has, like food contami-
 869 nated by blood, a realistic source of generalization from food
 754 which is actually spoiled. Kwoma employ the same word
 153 (*kafwa sek*) to describe putrifying meat or fruit, and to de-
 [192] scribe food which they believe is "poisoned." Thus if a child
 [196] becomes ill after not heeding the realistic warning against
 eating spoiled food, this should tend to strengthen warnings
 about sorcery. A second source from which the belief in sor-
 cery may receive generalized support is realistic warnings
 concerning aggression from human beings. Each time a per-
 son is scolded, threatened, insulted, or spanked by another
 person, such an event should strengthen his fear that he can
 be harmed by sorcery also.

121 A realistic source from which fears about blood contamina-
 869 tion may spring is less evident. The following suggestions
 826 may be made. When sickness results from food which is really
 153 contaminated, it should strengthen a person's tendency to
 avoid food which is supposed to be contaminated. Secondly,
 [196] the Kwoma word for milk is "breast blood." Children are
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made to abhor milk at the time of weaning, and this abhorrence may generalize through the common term to the drinking of blood or to eating things believed to be contaminated with it.⁴

Imitation, as well as warning and generalization, is of considerable importance in the inculcation of supernatural beliefs. In the previous chapter it was indicated that imitation took its place along with teaching as one of the two most important mechanisms of culture transmission. Although imitation was not analyzed in detail, it was indicated that a Kwoma pupil is very frequently rewarded for behaving like other persons in the society, particularly those who are in the same sex, age, and kinship category as the pupil. Conversely, Kwoma pupils frequently do not gain rewards and do experience pain when they behave differently from these models. This is particularly true when the model gives evidences of being in a dangerous situation.⁵ Thus to behave differently from a model comes to evoke anxiety in a Kwoma pupil, whereas to behave like one comes to have an acquired reward value.⁶

The following case will illustrate the way in which supernatural fears are transmitted by means of imitation. I started to whistle one evening while Mar and Mey were visiting me. Mar warned me to stop lest I attract ghosts, but I persisted. Mar then bolted for his house and Mey fol-

⁴ Potable liquids such as coconut milk are classed with water, whereas undrinkable liquids such as milk, urine, and breadfruit sap are classed with blood.

⁵ The following case will serve as illustration of pain suffered for not imitating. Awa became possessed one night and began to belabor her sister with a stick. Chinuwa caught hold of Awa to prevent her from harming anyone. Several children from the hamlet, hearing the commotion, gathered to see what was happening. Awa struggled against Chinuwa's restraining arms, finally broke free, and began to lay about her with the stick. All the children except Fit ran out of reach. He delayed for a moment and received a blow from Awa on his legs. He then ran away as the rest had done. Fit, by this event, was at first punished for not imitating the other children and then rewarded for imitating them by escaping further blows. Such a situation as this not infrequently presents itself to Kwoma children.

⁶ See N. E. Miller and John Dollard, *Social Learning and Imitation* (New Haven, 1941).

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 • 869²¹⁰ lowed him. Mey's behavior can be analyzed thus: the drive was fear caused both by my whistling and by the sight of [23] Mar starting to run while he remained; the response was running after Mar; and the reward was the reduction of fear. Had not Mar run away first, Mey might have discovered some other means of reducing his fear, but by imitating Mar he learned to avoid ghosts in the same manner as his older brother. Kwoma pupils in a similar manner learn to avoid *marsalai*, to protect themselves from the dangers of sorcery, and to escape the dangers associated with blood. Thus imitation is an important mechanism for the transmission of supernatural beliefs and practices.

[821] Chance as a factor in maintaining supernatural beliefs has long been noted by anthropologists and sociologists.* The data from Kwoma tend to support this theory. Storms occur so frequently that it would be extraordinary if one did not occasionally occur after a person has disturbed the dwelling place of a *marsalai*, and this would help to prevent the extinction of the habit of heeding. The following case illustrates this point. Yat had cleared a garden site near a large rock thought to be the dwelling place of a *marsalai*. When the time came to burn the dried brush and branches, a necessary step in the process of gardening, he expressed some anxiety lest this might anger the *marsalai* which lived in the rock, but nevertheless went ahead with his burning. That night there was a bad storm with a high wind, and Yat took this as proof of his belief that he had indeed angered the supernatural being. Wof, Gwiyp, and Mar all explained the storm in the same way. The next time that there was a bad storm, I said to Gwiyp: "Yat didn't disturb a *marsalai* today. How do you account for the storm?" Gwiyp replied: "Maybe Yat didn't, but someone else did. Probably it was one of those stupid people from Wanyi."

Chance also operates to support warnings about ghosts. Marok and Kar stayed visiting in a part of the tribe some distance from their home until after dark, thus not heeding

[113] * See W. G. Sumner and A. G. Keller, *The Science of Society* (New Haven, 1928), vol. II, chap. xxi.

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the warning about walking abroad during the night. On the way home they heard a strange noise, took it to be a ghost, stopped in their tracks, and yelled for help. War and others, who were gossiping in the house tamberan, heard their cries and shouted back instructions to make a dash for the house tamberan. They did this and thus escaped what they believed was imminent danger. The chance occurrence of a strange noise had operated on this occasion to strengthen the fear of walking abroad at night.

An episode which involved Wof illustrates how chance can strengthen sorcery beliefs. He came home one day to find that someone had tampered with his store of sago flour. Believing that someone had taken flour in order to sorcerize him, he asked his first wife if she knew who could have done it. She replied that she had seen his second wife in that part of the room and that it was undoubtedly she who had stolen the food in order to sorcerize him. When Wof accused the younger woman, she denied it. The next day Wof came to my house and asked me if I had any medicine against sorcery, for he felt sick. He said that his head and stomach ached and he knew that someone was trying to sorcerize him. Whether Wof's illness was an attack of malaria, psychological depression resulting from repressed anger at his wives, or some other psychic or physical disturbance, it strengthened his belief in the efficacy of sorcery. He probably guarded his food stores more carefully thereafter.¹⁰

Chance can operate to reinforce the habit of heeding a warning about blood. Children who let blood from their penises do grow up; after phlebotomy has been practiced pains eventually disappear; and women who menstruate and men who let blood from themselves remain healthy. The following case also illustrates how chance may operate to support the belief in blood contamination. Toward the end of my stay at Kwoma our regular shoot boy left and we appointed Mes to take his place. Previously he had helped around our house and had eaten whatever pigeon meat was

¹⁰ It was, indeed, not long after this that he scolded Ham for walking about his porch and accused him of being a thief of sorcery material.

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[262] left over from our table. When he became shoot boy the question arose as to whether he could still eat this meat since he killed it himself. Gwiyp was of the opinion that since he killed the birds with a gun rather than with a spear or arrow his blood would not be transferred and it would be perfectly safe to eat the meat. Yat, his *paternal uncle*, disagreed with this opinion, and held that it would be dangerous. Gwiyp then argued that the former shoot boy had eaten birds that he had shot without getting sick. Yat countered that, although he did not get sick, he had missed many shots and that this was probably due to his having eaten his own kill. Mes decided to heed his *uncle's* warning and ate no more pigeon meat. It happened that Mes was a very good shot and missed extremely few birds. He explained his accuracy as proof of the wisdom of heeding his *uncle's* warning.

Certain forces operate against heeding unrealistic warnings in Kwoma society. One of the most important of these is the fatigue drive. This drive exerts a constant pressure on the pupil not to run away from ghosts, not to bother to avoid the dwelling place of *maršalai*, to be careless about his food leavings, and not to go to the trouble of gathering nettles to scrape his penis to renew his blood. In other words his fears of the supernatural must be strong enough to overcome his indolence. Furthermore, the avoidance of supernatural dangers is frequently incompatible with the satisfaction of some other drive. When Yat discovered that he had cleared his garden too near a *maršalai's* dwelling place, his fear of disturbing the *maršalai* was opposed by his need to raise vegetables in a convenient place in order to satisfy his hunger. Similarly, when a pupil scrapes his penis or practices phlebotomy to let out bad blood these acts are opposed by the pain which they cause; when he does not eat a pig he has killed or yams he has planted, these renunciations are opposed by his hunger for these foods. Likewise a pupil's avoidance of ghosts and fear of sorcery often force him to give up satisfactions which he might otherwise attain.

In contrast to realistic warnings, when a pupil does not heed an unrealistic warning, the pain, except by chance, does

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not follow from the source specified. This could be expected to result, through the operation of the principle of extinction,¹¹ in a weakening of the habit of heeding this particular warning and in a functional discrimination between realistic and unrealistic dangers.¹² The fact that these unrealistic warnings are sanctioned by the community normally prevents such an event from occurring. Pupils are punished for not heeding warnings about *maralai*, ghosts, sorcery, or blood, as is illustrated by the following case. Kwiya and Fit each bought a harmonica from me and began playing it around their house. Their mother warned them that this would bring ghosts. Neither of them heeded this warning, so the mother took matters in her own hands. She scolded them both severely and forced them to return their harmonicas to me. An even more striking case, perhaps, occurred when Mundik,¹³ a youth who had not yet received his keloids of manhood, attended a funeral ceremony, thus ignoring the warning about the danger from the *maralai* of the cult to those who are not yet initiated. Mundik was attacked and beaten by the members of the cult, and, after being tied hand and foot, was thrown into a near-by dwelling. Had it not been for our presence he might well have been killed.

Since social sanctions are, in the last analysis, responsible for the maintenance of supernatural beliefs, an inquiry might profitably be made into the problem of why parents take the time and effort to force children to heed warnings. It may indeed be asked why they even issue these unrealistic warnings. A detailed answer to the above questions is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a few suggestions can be made. In the first place, since the teachers have been brought up in Kwoma culture they do not distinguish between realistic and unrealistic dangers as such. Hence they believe that if a

¹¹ See chap. vii, p. 192, n. 30.

¹² If a response to a generalized cue does not achieve a reward, but the response to the original cue continues to do so, the organism learns to discriminate between the two cues and to react only to the one which leads to reward. See E. R. Hilgard and D. G. Marquis, *Conditioning and Learning* (New York, 1940), chap. viii.

¹³ Mundik was a Yelagu who was staying with relatives at Kwoma.

121 pupil does not heed an unrealistic warning he will be injured
869 just as surely as, and perhaps even more severely than, if he
178 ignored a realistic warning. Why they wish to prevent the
child from being injured is a complex problem, involving
identification, loss of help and support, and sanctions against
negligence. The important question is why, if parents make
their children heed unrealistic warnings in order to prevent
them from being injured, does this habit not extinguish when
they observe a child experience no harmful consequences
when he disregards a supernatural danger? The following
case of the extinction of a supernatural belief indicates that
this is as real as well as a logical possibility.

121 Mar and Gwiyap had both been warned not to eat sago
869 flour washed by a female lest it make them sick. Before they
178 started to work as our houseboys they had heeded this warn-
252 ing and each had worked with one of his *sisters* in the process
262 of extracting sago flour. They had washed the pith while the
sister crushed it. When they began to work for us, however,
we demanded their services in the mornings, when they would
otherwise have gone to the swamp to replenish the household
flour supply. Awa and Kwiya, the *sisters* who had hitherto
worked with them, had no other available *brothers*, and there-
fore formed a team of their own. They took turns washing and
crushing and, of course, produced flour washed by a female.
Mar and Gwiyap were somewhat hesitant about trying this
flour, but they were faced with the dilemma of either going
without flour, which had been a staple in their diet since
weaning, or ceasing to work for us, which would have meant
losing frequent gifts of trade goods as well as some prestige.
They chose to risk disregarding the warnings about the food
and hoped that the flour would not be like other bad food
they had eaten and which had made them sick. Their parents
scolded them for this behavior and warned them again. Since
no other painful consequences resulted from their first at-
tempt, they decided to try it again, and, for the remaining
six months of our stay, they and the rest of their household
ate this supposedly harmful food. After the first few occa-
sions their parents stopped scolding and warning them.

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Thus, not only can the supernatural fears of pupils extin- (21
guish, but so also can the fears of the teachers become re- 869
duced in the same way, so that they no longer maintain these 178
beliefs by sanctioning them.

The fact that Kwoma children can learn not to heed, and Kwoma parents to stop issuing and sanctioning unrealistic warnings, raises a serious question. Why does this not occur more frequently? Why, in the course of time, have not all these supernatural beliefs disappeared as a result of this process? The answer to this is suggested by one of the basic postulates of the functional theory of anthropology. Parents continue to issue unrealistic warnings and to sanction them [82] because they form an integral part of one or more systems of beliefs, customs, and organized activities which, as a whole, satisfy a social need.¹¹

The belief in *marsalai* forms a large part of the charter¹² 776
of the yam cult.¹³ *Marsalai* are believed to be present when- 796
ever this cult holds a ceremonial meeting and to bless those 794
who participate. In playing the instruments of the cult, the 182
members are producing a representation of the voices of 121
these beings. After a ceremony, no man who has attended may have intercourse with his wife, because the powerful and dangerous influence of the cult *marsalai* still clings to him, and might injure her. Thus, were the belief in these monsters to disappear, the Kwoma would be forced either to provide a new *raison d'être* for their cult ceremonies or to give them up altogether. It is not necessary here to present a detailed 794
account of the functions of the cult, but a few of them may 182
be mentioned to show how important this institution is in 121
Kwoma society. The most direct function of the cult seems

¹¹ See B. Malinowski, "The Scientific Basis of Applied Anthropology," [113]
Revue Académica D'Italia, XV:111 (1940), 22.

¹² Every institution consists in part of the traditional purposes and rea- [113]
sons for its existence which are believed by the members of the personnel. Malinowski has called this the charter. See B. Malinowski, "The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, XI:IV (1939), 952-951.

¹³ The personnel, norms, and material apparatus of this institution can be gathered from the descriptive chapters. The charter and functions are stressed here because of their importance in this context.

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121 The distribution of pork to relatives also serves to cement kinship bonds. The belief that a
826 person should not eat yams which he has planted, because of
182 blood contamination, results in exchange planting and thus
[602] strengthens the coöperative bonds between relatives. Finally,
[262] the beliefs in blood strengthen the rules of incest and exog-
[582] amy, since it is thought that children of parents with the
same blood are not likely to be strong and healthy.

• 869 Kwoma beliefs about *maralai*, ghosts, sorcery, and blood
121 are thus seen to be not isolated unrealistic fears, but theories
182 which are enmeshed and intertwined with many of the important
institutions of the culture.²¹ It is consequently understandable that a Kwoma teacher should insist that a pupil learn these beliefs and that he should tend to disregard evidence that they are unrealistic. The pupil, too, experiences many of the advantages which these beliefs entail, a fact which aids the teacher in the task of inculcation.

121 Although the above analysis gives an answer to the question of why these unrealistic fears do not extinguish, it raises
178 an equally serious one: How can such fears ever extinguish? In other words, if culture is integrated and functional, how can social change ever take place? The case of Gwiyap and Mar suggests one possible answer to this question. The belief that sago washed by women is not good to eat has the function of making Kwoma men do their share of the work of extracting sago flour. In other words, it supports an equitable division of labor in this phase of Kwoma economic life. The presence of the ethnographer, introducing trade goods which were highly prized by Gwiyap and Mar, their *sisters*, and their parents, introduced a disturbing element into this adjustment. Mar and Gwiyap were willing to take the chance of becoming sick, their *sisters* were willing to do more work, and their parents were willing to let the customary division of labor lapse in order to obtain these trade goods. Without
[123] intention, or even awareness of the event until after its occurrence, the ethnographer, by introducing a new form of wealth

²¹ Supernatural beliefs, on a cultural level, are similar to neurotic symptoms in the individual, in that both are based on unrealistic fear, both result in secondary gains, and both resist extinction.

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and providing a new means of earning it, had set the stage for the extinction of a supernatural belief.

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In sum, a number of factors seem to be responsible for the inculcation and maintenance of supernatural beliefs and practices. Kwoma teachers, having repeatedly warned their pupils concerning real dangers, are enabled to use this technique to teach their pupils to avoid dangers which do not exist. To make these unrealistic warnings more forceful, they describe the supernatural dangers as being similar to the real dangers from which their pupils have experienced pain. Imitation also plays as important a rôle as in the transmission of the other aspects of the culture. Despite all these forces which lead a Kwoma pupil to respect supernatural dangers, the effort and deprivation frequently involved in carrying out magico-religious rituals tend to make him omit them. Since such omissions would soon lead to the extinction of these habits, the sanctions of society, as implemented by punishments from his teachers, provide the ultimate force which prevents the pupil from discovering that these dangers do not really exist and do not have to be avoided. Finally, the teachers themselves continue to inculcate these beliefs because they are integral parts of institutions which as a whole are necessary for the satisfaction of the basic and acquired drives of the constituent members of Kwoma society.

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